

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed December 3, 2003, has been carefully reviewed and the following remarks and amendment have been made in consequence thereof.

Subsequent to entry of the foregoing amendment, Claims 1, 4-33, 35, and 36 will be pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, 4, 9, and 11 are rejected. Claims 3, 5-8, and 10 are objected to. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled. Claims 5 and 6 are newly independent. An additional fee is due for newly independent Claims 5 and 6.

A fee calculation sheet for the newly independent claims along with authorization to charge a deposit account in the amount of the calculated fee are submitted herewith.

The objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.83 (a), is respectfully traversed. Specifically, Claim 6 has been amended to recite "a shoulder extending from one of said first end and said second end...." For the reasons set forth above, Applicant respectfully requests the objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.83 (a) be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1, 2, 4, 9, and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Nakagawa (US 4,007,563) is respectfully traversed.

Claim 3 was indicated as objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled and Claim 1 has been amended to include the recitations from Claims 2 and 3. Accordingly, Claim 1 is submitted to be patentable over Nakagawa.

Claims 4, 9, and 11 depend from independent Claim 1. When the recitations of Claims 4, 9, and 11 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 1, Applicant submits that Claims 4, 9, and 11 are likewise patentable over Nakagawa.

For the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 102(b) rejection of Claims 1, 2, 4, 9, and 11 be withdrawn.

The objection to Claims 3, 5-8, and 10 is respectfully traversed.

Claims 3, 5-8, and 10 were indicated as objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled and Claim 1 has been amended to include the recitations from Claims 2 and 3, and as such is submitted to be in condition for allowance. Claims 5 and 6 have been rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Claims 1, 5, and 6 are submitted to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 7, 8, and 10 depend from newly independent Claim 6 which is submitted to be in condition for allowance. When the recitations of Claims 7, 8, and 10 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 6, Applicant submits that Claims 7, 8, and 10 are likewise in condition for allowance.

For the reasons set forth above, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection to Claims 3, 5-8, and 10 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all the claims now active in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,



Robert B. Neeser III
Registration No. 45,548
ARMSTRONG TEASDALE LLP
One Metropolitan Square, Suite 2600
St. Louis, Missouri 63102-2740
(314) 621-5070